

High on Adrenaline

By Staff Writer

edges. “I would say about 50 percent of our sales are to military service members, with most of the younger guys buying street racers and the older guys buying cruisers.”

Regardless of whether motorcycle sales are surging locally, Zerillo says motorcycle mishaps remain a concern. He recalled a recent case that illustrates the dangers of bravado biking. A Marine riding on base with a beer in his hand took a spill. He wasn’t hurt badly, but he did incur the wrath of the law after his BAC measured 0.16. The Marine had not attended the base motorcycle-safety course, said Zerillo.

Staff Sergeant Corey M. Moore, a career planner with 1st Force Service Support Group, says riders can learn vital skills in the course. “Ever since I took it, I have felt a lot more comfortable on my bike,” he said. “Not only is the course mandatory to ride on base, I also recommend it.”

The course is a great way to learn the rules of the road, noted Zerillo, adding that many Marines seem ill-informed if not blatantly defiant of the law. “Many ride their bikes in town with permits, which is legal, but there are restrictions to the permits,” he said. “For example, with a learner’s permit, riders are not allowed to ride at night or with a passenger.”

Zerillo urged commands to take safety violations into their own hands. Commands can administer non-judicial punishment to Marines who neglect base orders, such as speeding or driving under the influence. He said he’d rather see Marines lawful, safe and sound, rather than injured or in trouble.

“It just doesn’t make any sense to survive seven months of dodging bullets and IEDs to then come back here and die on a weekend,” he said. **GW**

LCpl Reimers is stationed at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, CA.

As if losing our troops to the enemy in Iraq isn’t enough, a disturbing number return to American soil only to be killed in speeding and drunk-driving mishaps.

One example is a 19-year-old lance corporal, who was killed while riding as the passenger in a car driven by another Marine. The driver was street racing on a freeway when his car left the road and crashed into a tree. The lance corporal had been back home a month from the war.

In another incident, a 20-year-old Marine home on leave from the war died while driving home from a bar with three friends. They were speeding down a two-lane highway when the Marine’s SUV went off the road and also hit a tree.

Some experts link the problem to a danger-induced adrenaline rush. They say people’s bodies become so used to the constant stream of adrenaline that keeps them going in combat that they seek out those activities providing the same effect when they get home. This problem hits both young and seasoned veterans.

As one expert noted, “They really miss the rush they needed to survive the war and to get their jobs done. They don’t recognize their behavior as risky; they just know they feel good again.” One returning veteran admitted to driving his truck much too fast without even realizing it until he glanced at the speedometer.

Most returning war veterans learn to adjust on their own or to seek help. In a few cases, though, the problem progresses and turns into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is characterized by people regularly craving the rush.

Recognizing the potential for this problem, the Commandant Marine Corps, Gen. Michael Hagee, ordered commanding officers to provide “warrior transition” talks to returning troops. He also ordered chaplains and medical personnel to be on hand to watch for potentially serious cases. Another move included organizing a stand-down for all units within a week of their return to discuss safety issues, including off-duty driving. **GW**

